

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

REEBOK ANNOUNCES AN INNOVATIVE INITIATIVE

HON. JOHN JOSEPH MOAKLEY

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 25, 1996

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, at a time when many companies are asking themselves how they can select manufactures that do not exploit workers around the world, Reebok International Ltd. has announced an innovative and precedent-setting initiative in Pakistan.

Mr. Speaker, about half of the world's soccer balls are made in Pakistan and recent reports indicate that as many as 20 percent of the balls are being stitched by children. As a result, Reebok has spent months negotiating with soccer ball manufacturers to come up with a way to ensure that children will not stitch Reebok balls. The result is an agreement between Reebok, Moltex, a Pakistani ball manufacturer, and Reed and Associates, a design and development company, that requires the construction of a new factory in which all stitching will be performed inside the factory, together with vigorous monitoring and an educational program to help area children formerly employed stitching balls.

Reebok has long been recognized for its leadership in creating awareness of human rights through its sponsorship of the Amnesty International Human Rights Now! Concert tour, through its annual Reebok Human Rights Award, and through its thoughtful implementation of its Reebok Human Rights Production Standards. With the child-labor-free soccer ball initiative, Reebok has again demonstrated that it can honor its commitment to human rights and be a successful business at the same time.

I have attached the letter from Peter Moore, senior vice president, Global Soccer/Rugby at Reebok which explains the initiative and ask that it be inserted into the RECORD at this time.

REEBOK

Stoughton, MA, June 12, 1996.

I am writing to announce that after many months of research and planning, Reebok has put into place plans to buy Pakistani-made soccer balls that we know with certainty will not be stitched by children. Before I describe this program to you, I want to provide you with the background that has led us to embark on this venture.

Reebok is a global athletic sports and fitness brand dedicated to bringing exciting, quality products to market. As a company that has long stood for human rights, we are also committed to finding partners that will manufacture these products in a fair and just manner.

Our soccer business is critically important to us worldwide and, ever since we first learned that as many as 20% of soccer ball stitchers in Pakistan may be children, we have been reassessing this aspect of our business with the hope that we could find a way to operate there that reflects our human rights standards.

Working with colleagues at the Soccer Industry Council of America (SICA), Reebok

helped establish the Task Force on Global Manufacturing Practices to organize, research and develop recommendations for action. The SICA Task Force represents a significant attempt by U.S. industry to address the problem of child labor. The Task Force has called on the services of outside experts, including a noted human rights activist and professor of human rights and business ethics at Columbia University and a highly-regarded research organization based in Pakistan with experience working with UNICEF and other international organizations.

Through the Task Force we have been able to understand possible options to explore—and what to avoid—when approaching this problem.

We learned that child labor in Pakistan is a symptom of serious social and economic challenges—rampant poverty, inadequate educational opportunities, and cultural attitudes concerning the responsibilities of family members, to name only three.

Although the conditions for children were by no means as abusive as we had feared (researchers found no support for allegations of “bonded” or “slave” labor in soccer ball assembly and conditions were substantially better than in other industries in that region) the use of children violated internationally recognized labor standards and our own code of conduct, the Reebok Human Rights Production Standards.

We learned that when children are used to stitch soccer ball panels, they are outside the factories, in homes and small stitching centers scattered across 250 square kilometers surrounding the industrial town of Sialkot. Under these conditions, it has been impossible to adequately monitor whether or not children were stitching balls.

Most knowledgeable individuals, non-governmental organizations and social service providers in Pakistan want U.S. companies to continue buying soccer balls made in Pakistan. Ceasing to source balls in Pakistan would cause additional hardship for the very workers and their families we are seeking to protect.

Industry alone cannot alleviate the conditions that give rise to child labor, although we feel we can and must do our part.

After soliciting a number of proposals from soccer ball manufacturers in Pakistan, Reebok has reached an agreement with Moltex Sporting Goods (PVT) Ltd. and Reed and Associates to establish a new manufacturing facility. Reed and Associates is a French-based company specializing in research and development, sourcing and manufacturing of soccer and rugby balls. Moltex is a Pakistani soccer and rugby ball manufacturing company. The agreement has three major components:

Moltex and Reed have agreed to begin immediate construction on a new soccer ball facility that will be dedicated to the production of Reebok balls. All work on the balls will be performed on this factory site. All workers will be age 15 (the legal working age in Pakistan) or higher. Should the minimum age for workers in Pakistan be raised, the higher age will apply to factory workers.

Reebok is making a commitment to support educational and/or vocational training for children in the soccer ball manufacturing region of Pakistan. We are keenly aware of the impact the changes we contemplate will have on children and their families currently

stitching soccer balls. Experts agree that the antidote to child labor is education. Reebok will support educational and/or vocational training programs in Pakistan, thus contributing to a more secure, hopeful future.

Reebok will undertake a vigorous monitoring program to ensure that: a/ children are not entering the workplace, and b/ soccer ball panels are not leaving the factory to be stitched by children. We are now involved in the process of determining what kind of monitoring would be most effective to achieve this end.

We are confident that this agreement will give us the framework to work with our Pakistani partners to commence initial production later this year and to achieve full production capacity by early 1997.

To those who wonder whether there are additional costs associated with in-factory stitchers and answer is: “yes.” Nevertheless, we are committed, as are our factory partners, to retaining our competitive place in the marketplace, delivering the high quality balls our consumers have come to expect and living up to our human rights production standards.

There is much to be done to implement this plan. We know it will not be easy and that there will be bumps along the road. Yet we know we cannot remain in the soccer ball business until and unless we find a way of doing business that allows us to live up to our commitments. We believe this arrangement can do that.

Sincerely,

PETER MOORE,

Senior Vice President, Global Soccer/Rugby Division.

U.N. CHARTER DAY—51 YEARS OF ACCOMPLISHMENT

HON. RONALD V. DELLUMS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 25, 1996

Mr. DELLUMS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 51st anniversary of the signing of the United Nations' Charter. The United Nations [UN] was created over World War II to meet a number of supranational objectives. It was tasked to maintain international peace and security, to promote recognition of fundamental human rights, to promote respect for international law, and to promote social progress and better standards of life worldwide.

There are some who feel that the United Nations has outlived its usefulness. Some see it as an irrelevant bureaucratically bloated organization, where diplomatic talk continues endlessly. There are unquestionably aspects of the United Nations that merit reform. But while friends of the United Nations recognize its problems to be a reason for reform, its enemies use those same problems as a basis to call for its destruction.

It is too easy to overlook the United Nation's many accomplishments, because many of them we now take for granted. For example, the United Nations helped to peacefully bring down the racist government in South Africa.

• This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.